

J. William Fulbright Commission
for Educational Exchange
in the Slovak Republic

ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

For the U.S. Government Fiscal Year:
October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023
Academic Year 2022-23

Lýdia Tobiášová – Executive Director
November 2023

A. THE COMMISSION

The J. William Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange in the Slovak Republic is a bi-national, not-for-profit organization, whose mission is to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between the people of the United States of America and the Slovak Republic through educational and cultural exchanges.

The Commission was established by an executive agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the United States of America in 1994 (319/1994 Coll.). The subsequent agreement signed in 2005 (98/2005 Coll.) was amended in 2017 (303/2017 Coll.). In 2017, the Slovak authorities started issuing national visas to Fulbright scholarship recipients and their dependents who have been exempted from visa fees since.

The main responsibilities of the Commission are as follows:

- administer grants and fellowships for U.S. and Slovak nationals to study, research, or lecture;
- identify and select the best candidates in both countries and engage them in academic exchanges within the highest standards of the Fulbright Program;
- identify fields in which mutual cooperation is desirable to further develop and increase expertise in particular fields;
- extend activities by establishing and supporting cost sharing programs with participating institutions;
- spread awareness and provide information about study and research opportunities in the United States.

In addition to the administration of the Fulbright Program, the Commission is the only official institution in Slovakia certified to provide accurate, comprehensive, and current information about studies in the U.S. through its educational advising center [EducationUSA](#), which is part of the worldwide educational advising network of the U.S. Department of State.

The Fulbright Commission is governed by the bi-national **Board of the Commission** which oversees the operation and activities of the Commission. The Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic appoints Slovak Board members and the U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic appoints American Board members. Both serve as Honorary Co-Chairpersons of the Board of the Commission.

The Board has the responsibility for setting long term goals and priorities of the program, program activities, selection and nomination of grantees, and coordination of finances of the Commission.

Honorary Co-Chairpersons:

Ján HORECKÝ	Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (from October until May 2023)
Daniel Bútorá	Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (since May 2023)
Gautam RANA	U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic (since September 2022)

U.S. Members:

Tamara STERNBERG-GRELLER	Public Affairs Officer, U.S Embassy Bratislava, Treasurer
Tara HALL	Deputy Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Bratislava (until August 2023)
Benjamin COHEN	Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Bratislava (since October 2023)
Linda STEYNE	Lecturer at the Department of British and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava
Alan DYKSTRA	Freelance Consultant/Educator

Slovak Members:

Jozef BÁTORA	Professor, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava
Marcel VYSOCKÝ	Director General, Section of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, Alternate Treasurer (since September 2022)
Daniela OSTATNÍKOVÁ	Professor, Head of the Institute of Physiology, Comenius University in Bratislava
Jana TOMKOVÁ	Director, Department of Cultural Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (until August 2023)
Denisa KOTEREC - FRELICHOVÁ	Director- General, Section of the Minister, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (since August 2023)

The Commission Staff:

Lýdia TOBIÁŠOVÁ	Executive Director
Denisa DOMARACKÁ	Finance Officer
Zuzana KOPČANOVÁ	Program and Study Officer/EducationUSA Adviser (until May 2023)
Silvia MIADOKOVÁ	Program and Study Officer/EducationUSA Adviser (since August 2023)
Dáša TAKO VELICHOVÁ	Program Officer

B. FULBRIGHT AWARDS

The Commission administers a variety of awards for both U.S. and Slovak citizens based on an open, merit-based competition and takes into account recommendations of selection committees focusing on professional skills, academic achievements, financial means available, and other program requirements; and announces the final nomination of Fulbright grantees.

The academic year 2022-23 had a standard cohort selected the year prior. The total number of participants in Fulbright programs administered by the Commission reached 32.

1. Fulbright Student Program

Slovak and U.S. graduate students can apply for 6 to 9 month scholarships to carry out independent research or study at Slovak or U.S. institutions, respectively. Candidates are required to prove an outstanding academic record and submit high-quality and well-conceived projects.

Slovak applicants may conduct an independent research, and if funding available, enroll in Master's programs. Fulbright Slovak Student Program is open to any field except for clinical medicine, M.BA and LL.M. Candidates without prior extensive U.S. study experience are given preference.

U.S. applicants can pursue individual research projects under tutorial of a Slovak expert in the respective field. Knowledge of Slovak language is desirable for commensurate with the level needed in fields like political science, history, linguistics, and anthropology.

SK Students:

Name	Nikola BEIM
Category	Research
Host Institution	Columbia University, Graduate School of Architecture, New York, NY
Home Institution	University of Applied Arts Vienna
Discipline/Specialization	Architecture/Architectural History
Project Title	The Architecture of Memory: Monuments in the Digital Age
Months/Start Date	6 months/January 2023
Name	Barbora REHÁK BUČKOVÁ
Category	Research
Host Institution	University of Pennsylvania, School of Medicine – Department of Radiology, Philadelphia, PA
Home Institution	Czech Technical University in Prague/National Institute of Mental Health of the Czech Republic
Discipline/Specialization	Computer Science
Project Title	Artificial Intelligence in Biomedical Imaging
Months/Start Date	6 months/September 2022
Name	Elena ŠTEFANCOVÁ
Category	Research
Host Institution	University of Colorado, Boulder, CO
Home Institution	Comenius University, Bratislava

Discipline/Specialization	Computer Science
Project Title	User Behavior in the Digital World and Recommended Systems
Months/Start Date	6 months/ January 2023
Name	Katarína KOVÁČOVÁ*
Category	Master Degree
Host Institution	New York University, New York, NY
Home Institution	NA
Discipline/Specialization	Environmental Sciences
Project Title	Profitability and Circular Economy
Months/Start Date	9 months/August 2021
*Kováčová interrupted the studies after 1st semester and resumed the study in January 2023	

US Students:

Name	Liliana WURFL
Category	Open Research
Host Institution	Institute of Biology and Ecology, UPJŠ Košice
Home Institution	Clark University, Worcester, MA
Discipline/Specialization	Biology
Project Title	Tick Transmitted Diseases

2. Fulbright Scholar Program

U.S. scholars with comprehensive experience propose projects on research or lecturing at Slovak institutions. The applications are welcomed in any field; although preference may be given to the needs of Slovak academic institutions. Candidates without extensive research or lecturing experience in the Slovak Republic are given preference.

Slovak scholars who hold a Ph.D. degree (in arts and some other fields comparable professional experience is required) must include an invitation letter from the U.S. institution in their application. All areas of research or lecturing, except clinical medicine, are eligible. Candidates without prior extensive U.S. research or study experience are given preference.

SK Scholars:

Name	Kristína GUMULÁK RYPÁKOVÁ
Category	Research
Host Institution	Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Home Institution	Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava
Discipline/Specialization	Architecture/ Ecology
Project Title	Digital/Analogue Tools as Creative Phenomenon in Design Process
Months/Start Date	5 months/January 2022
Name	Andrej KOVÁČ
Category	Research
Host Institution	University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, WA
Home Institution	Institute of Neuroimmunology of Slovak Academy of Sciences
Discipline/Specialization	Neuroscience/ Neurobiology & Neurophysiology
Project Title	The Molecular Mechanism of Tau Protein Movement through Brain Barriers
Months/Start Date	3,5 months/July 2022

Name	Peter MIKULA
Category	Research
Host Institution	Institute of Vertebrate Biology, Czech Academy of Sciences
Home Institution	Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN
Discipline/Specialization	Biology/Ecology
Project Title	Human Tolerance by Animals in the Anthropocene
Months/Start Date	6 months, October 2022
Name	Olga TRIAŠKA STEFANOVIČ
Category	Research
Host Institution	The New School, Parsons School of Design, NY
Home Institution	Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava
Discipline/Specialization	Arts
Project Title	Interdisciplinary Visual Research of Utopian Cold War Aesthetic from Both Sides of the Iron Curtain
Months/Start Date	6 months/ September 2022
Name	Stanislav ZÁBOJNÍK
Category	Research
Host Institution	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
Home Institution	University of Economics, Bratislava
Discipline/Specialization	Business/International Business
Project Title	Export Competitiveness Impacted by Decarbonization Business
Months/Start Date	6 months/ February 2023

Olja Triaška Stefanovic had an exhibition of the photography at UMass Dartmouth's College of Visual and Performing Arts called "Brotherhood and Unity", in the CVPA Campus Gallery from January 26 through February 28, 2023. She also had a joint lecture – Artist Talk, with Meridel Rubenstein in the theater in the Randall Museum, San Francisco.

US Scholars

Name	Dana CUPKOVA
Category	Teaching/ Research
Host Institution	Academy of Fine Arts and Design
Home Institution	Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA
Discipline/Specialization	Architecture/ Ecology
Project Title	Urban Ecologies of Concrete Architecture: Cultivating Futures of Material Reuse
Months/Start Date	5 months/August 2022
Name	Gerald Michael GROSHEK*
Category	Teaching/ Research
Host Institution	University of Economics in Bratislava
Home Institution	University of Redlands, Redlands, CA
Discipline/Specialization	Economics/ International Economics / Trade
Project Title	Adapting to Global Challenges in Higher Education
Months/Start Date	6 months/September 2022

Name	James MENDEZ
Category	Research
Host Institution	Slovak Academy of Sciences, Institute of Chemistry
Home Institution	Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN
Discipline/Specialization	Chemistry/ Polymer Chemistry
Project Title	Environmentally friendly polysaccharide 3D and 4D printing
Months/Start Date	4 months/ February 2023

Name	Kristin TOLLEFSON
Category	Research
Host Institution	University of Zilina, Faculty of Humanities, Dept. of Mediamatics & Cultural Heritage
Home Institution	Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, Bainbridge Island, WA
Discipline/Specialization	Arts/ Metalsmithing
Project Title	Wirework and Contemporary Art as Social Practice in Slovakia
Months/Start Date	5 months/ February 2023

* Due to the war in Ukraine, the Commission accepted U.S. scholar - Mr. Gerald Michael Groshek, who originally applied for Ukraine. His grant was fully covered by the IIE. **Gerald Groshek** participated at Researcher's Night on September 30th, 2022. The event was held at Stará Tržnica (Bratislava) and was attended by students of all ages. The Faculty of the National Economy of the University of Economics in Bratislava had a booth with the theme "Learn Economics". Gerald organized the Conference with his colleagues from Ukraine called "Education disrupted: Universities in a time of war".

Kristen Tollefson was interviewed at Rádio Slovakia International on her research focused on wireworking in Slovakia. She also gave a public lecture at "Nová Synagóga" (Žilina) and engaged with local community when performing at a local dance performance.

3. English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program

The Slovak secondary schools receive assistance in strengthening English language instructions by establishing a qualified native speaker presence. At the same time, U.S. participants gain from intensive cross-cultural interaction and research opportunities.

Due to the increase of SK funds, priority has been given to the ETA program which has grown from 8 grants in 2020 to 12 grants in 2022/23. ETAs are evenly distributed among 8 regions, mostly outside the big towns and are placed in the variety of schools – grammar schools, vocational schools, public or religious schools. The ETA program is very popular and there is a high demand from Slovak secondary schools to host an ETA. The Commission obtained 140 + applications from secondary schools in the past two years. The number of US applicants is also gradually increasing.

Name	Evan Julian DILIBERTO
Host Institution	Stredná priemyselná škola elektrotechnická, Bratislava
Home Institution	Providence College, Providence, RI
Major	History/Philosophy
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022

Name	Saylor Ashlyn EPPERSON
Host Institution	Gymnázium Janka Francisci – Rimavského, Levoča
Home Institution	University of Tennessee – Knoxville, Knoxville, TN
Major	Political Science/History & Women, Gender, and Sexuality
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022
Name	Michael Andrew GRIFFIN
Host Institution	Stredná priemyselná škola stavebná Dušana Samuela Jurkoviča, Trnava
Home Institution	College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA
Major	History and Political Science
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022
Name	Meredith Andrea JOHNSON
Host Institution	Stredná odborná škola pedagogická, Turčianske Teplice
Home Institution	Clemson University, Clemson, SC
Major	Political Science/Philosophy & Communications
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022
Name	Sydney Ann KARPOWICH
Host Institution	Gymnázium bl. biskupa Gojdiča, Prešov
Home Institution	Villanova University, Villanova, PA
Major	Accounting, International Business, and Data Analytics
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022
Name	Ryan Patrick MCCRACKEN
Host Institution	Gymnázium P. Horova, Michalovce
Home Institution	William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA
Major	History
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022
Name	Cassidy Noel MILLER
Host Institution	Súkromná spojená škola, Štúrovo
Home Institution	Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX
Major	Higher Education
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022
Name	Nathaniel Lucas SANSOM
Host Institution	Obchodná akadémia, Rožňava
Home Institution	Salisbury University, Salisbury, MD
Major	Political Science, Conflict Analysis, and Dispute Resolution
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022

Name	Emma STEFFAN
Host Institution	Gymnázium, Dubnica nad Váhom
Home Institution	Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, PA
Major	Government/History
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022
Name	Lauren Avery WHITTINGTON
Host Institution	Gymnázium Andreja Sládkoviča, Banská Bystrica
Home Institution	Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA
Major	History/Religion
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022
Name	Lilly West WILCOX
Host Institution	Spojená škola, Detva
Home Institution	Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Major	English & Communication Studies/Argumentation & Law
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	10 months/September 2022

4. Fulbright Specialist Program

Slovak academic institutions can invite a U.S. expert for 2 to 6 weeks to lecture, assist in developing curricula and educational materials, participate or lead seminars and/or workshops, etc.

The program is a short-term complement to the traditional Fulbright Scholar Program. It attracts those U.S. experts who otherwise would not be able to participate in one or two semester program.

Name	*Douglas McKECHNIE
Host Institution	Matej Bel University, Faculty of Law
Home Institution	United States Air Force Academy
Discipline/Specialization	Law
Months/Start Date	3 weeks/ March 2023
Name	Kevin SIMPSON
Host Institution	Slovak National Museum - Museum of Jewish Culture
Home Institution	John Brown University
Discipline/Specialization	Peace & Conflict Resolution
Months/Start Date	2 weeks/ March 2023 (second visit planned for Spring 2024)
Name	Cornell W. CLAYTON
Host Institution	Comenius University
Home Institution	Washington State University, Foley Institute
Discipline/Specialization	Political Science
Months/Start Date	3 weeks, April 2023

Name	David MINOR
Host Institution	Slovak Center of Scientific and Technical Information
Home Institution	UC San Diego Library
Discipline/Specialization	Library Science
Months/Start Date	3 weeks/ April 2023
Name	Jan ILAVSKY
Host Institution	FunGlass – Centre for Functional and Surface Functionalized Glass, Alexander Dubcek University of Trenčín
Home Institution	Argonne National Laboratory
Discipline/Specialization	Physics Education
Months/Start Date	3 weeks/ June 2023
Name	Jon COX
Host Institution	Matej Bel University, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Natural Sciences
Home Institution	University of Delaware
Discipline/Specialization	Education
Months/Start Date	3 weeks/ September 2023

5. Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence (S-I-R) Program

Scholar-In-Residence Program assists U.S. higher education institutions in expanding academic exchange programs. By supporting non-U.S. Scholars through grants for teaching at institutions with no strong international component, both the U.S. institution and the scholar grantee benefit.

Name	Katarína PROCHÁZKOVÁ
Category	Lecturing
Host Institution	University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, La Crosse, WI
Home Institution	University of Economics, Bratislava
Discipline/Specialization	International Business & Leadership
Months/Start Date	6 months/ January 2023

6. Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program

The Commission launched the Fulbright TEA Program in the academic year 2021-22 with the first selection in Spring 2022. The FTEA program brings international secondary-level teachers to the U.S. for a six-week professional development opportunity to take academic seminars at a host university, observe and share their expertise with U.S. teachers and students, and develop action plans to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills in their home schools, classrooms, and communities.

3 out of 4 nominated candidates were selected by the U.S. Department of State: Lenka **ZGÚTOVÁ** (principal), Daniel **GONOS** (principal), and Natália **GETTLEROVÁ** (alternate).

The program was postponed to Fall 2023. Lenka Zgútová and Daniel Gonos have been placed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Natália Gettlerová at the University of Northern Colorado.

C. OTHER AWARDS

1. Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

The program gives opportunity to mid-career professionals to participate in 10-month study and related professional experience at U.S. institutions in fields such as environmental management, finances, human resources management, urban planning, communications, drug abuse education, etc. Final selection of nominees from over 150 countries is made at the U.S. Department of State.

Name	Gabriela MEZEIOVÁ
Host Institution	Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Home Institution	Slovak Centre for Scientific and Technical Information, Bratislava
Field of Study	Thriving Communities/Education Administration, Planning and Policy
Project Title	(R)Evolution in education
Months/Start Date	10 months/August 2022

After a successful completion of the Humphrey Fellowship in August 2023, Gabriela Mezeiova has been selected as a recipient of a **2023 Humphrey Fellowship Alumni Impact Award**. Her project "*DearTomorrow: Dear Slovakia*" will be carried out through cooperation between the Slovak NGO *Slovak Eco Quality* and the U.S. partner *DearTomorrow*. This project aims to adapt DearTomorrow educational resources to Slovak context, enhance skills of educators in climate communication and public engagement, increase awareness and commitment among workshop participants regarding climate change, and provide valuable resources to educational community to promote climate justice actions. The project also involves piloting immersive storytelling and arts experiences in Slovakia and fostering reflective engagement on the climate crisis and individual roles in finding solutions.

2. Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSIs)

SUSI for Student Leaders on Civic Engagement:

- **Tomáš Čorej** (BISLA, Bratislava) – Michigan State University

SUSI for Scholars on U.S. Economics & Sustainable Development:

- **Ján Huňady** (Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica) – Institute for Training and Development in Amherst & Suffolk University in Boston

SUSI for Scholars on Journalism & Media:

- **Peter Kravčák** (Catholic University in Ružomberok) – Arizona State University, Tempe

SUSI for Secondary Educators:

- **Viktor Verba** (Gymnázium bl. biskupa Gojdiča, Prešov) – University of Montana, Missoula

3. Ronald and Eileen Weiser Professional Development Award

The Weiser Award (not sponsored by the U.S. Department of State) gives opportunity to Slovak scholars to pursue short-term research visits (4 to 6 weeks) at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Candidates may submit projects in any field of research or teaching with faculty partners at the University of Michigan. These awards are made possible thanks to a gift from Ambassador Ronald Weiser, U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia from 2001 to 2004, and his wife, Eileen Lappin Weiser. There were no Weiser Fellows in the academic year 2022-23 as a result of the suspension of the program due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program has been resumed in 2023.

Adriana Duriš Adameová from the Faculty of Pharmacy, Comenius University in Bratislava has been selected as a new Weiser fellow from September 8 to October 22, 2023.

4. Reporting Complexity: A Study Tour in the U.S. for Journalists from Central and Eastern Europe

Practicing journalists could apply for a two-week study visit to the U.S. aimed at building skills, knowledge, and awareness related to reporting on complex issues. The program was administered by Fulbright Romania.

The study tour included a combination of custom professional workshops, discussions with experienced journalists and media representatives who have relevant experience and portfolios, opportunities for networking, as well as visits to media organizations of interest in and around Washington D.C. and New York City.

The visits were conducted in two slots:

October 15-29, 2022: **Kristína Votrubová** (daily Postoj), **Otakar Horák** (daily DenníkN)

November 5-19, 2022: **Martina Bolibruchová** (zmudri.sk) and **Eva Frantová** (daily SME).

D. GRANT SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

The Commission carries out different activities throughout the year to support Fulbright programs, grantees and alumni, such as recruitment campaigns, selections of candidates for each program, promotional and outreach activities, educational advising, and hosting or supporting events, seminars and conferences, whether on-line or in-person.

- **The Orientation Program**

Regular orientation seminars are being held for both Slovak and American grantees and are mandatory components of the Fulbright program.

- **Orientation seminar for incoming U.S. grantees** was organized in September 2022 in order to familiarize U.S. grantees with Slovak history, cultural and social background, economy, education system etc. Furthermore, a review of the terms and conditions of their grant, financial, visa, and health issues are an essential part of the orientation. A crash course on Slovak language has proven to be of importance to U.S. grantees. The Commission annually reviews and updates the program in order to implement the guidance and protocol for a variety of possible crisis situations, diversity & equity & inclusion, mental health and well-being, and other emerging issues. The orientation is also a platform to meet and network

with fellow grantees as well as representatives of the U.S. Embassy, Fulbright alumni and organizations and institutions involved in Slovak-American exchanges and relations.

- **Pre-Departure orientation seminar** is mandatory for all outgoing Slovak grantees in order to brief them on important issues related to their departure from the U.S. and the successful completion of their grant. On November 29, 2022, the Commission held an in-person PDO meeting for grantees who did not participate in Spring 2022 and departed in January 2023. The PDO's main agenda includes the terms and conditions of the Fulbright awards, visa applications, health insurance, and financial aspects of the awards. A separate PDO was held for SUSIs participants (on May 12 and May 25, 2023) as well as for FTEA participants (on August 8, 2023). Regular annual PDO for 2023-24 grantees was held on June 26, 2023.
- **Virtual PDO meeting** for incoming U.S. grantees in Spring was held on January 5, 2023 and for those coming in the academic year 2023-24 on June 28, 2023.
- [The Mid-Year Conference](#)

The annual mid-year conference was held on **January 26 to 29, 2023** in Trenčianske Teplice. It provided opportunity to U.S. grantees to share and exchange their experiences, present their goals and achievements, and discuss personal and professional insights with the Commission's staff. It provided the Commission with different perspectives on the Fulbright program in Slovakia in order to adopt necessary changes to improve its administration. The conference program also reflected current sociopolitical issues, and grantees had a discussion on Slovakia's role in recent development in Central and Eastern Europe with the Fulbright Slovakia alum Michal Vašečka who is a prominent Slovak sociologist.

- [The Certificate Award Ceremony](#)

June 2, 2023 - the Commission prepared an award ceremony for all Fulbright grantees in the academic year 2022-23 to appreciate their efforts and achievements throughout the year. The ceremony was hosted by the U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia Gautam Rana at his residence.

- [EducationUSA Advising Center](#)

The EducationUSA Advising Center of the Commission as part of the worldwide network of the U.S. Department of State provides current, unbiased, and realistic information on study programs in the U.S., counseling on all matters connected with the U.S. educational system, U.S. standardized tests, application procedures, financial aid, visa issues, etc. to the interested public. It operates daily and provides free consulting services upon appointment.

The Center supports and trains the employees of American Corners located in public libraries in Banská Bystrica and Košice. The centers are a common effort of the U.S. Department of State and U.S. embassies with the aim of providing better resources for people seeking information on the United States. The Center also serves U.S. partners and institutions as a source of information on Slovak and European higher education systems, e.g. verification and explanation of Slovak credentials, providing resources of information, etc.

Regular visits to high schools hosting ETAs are of a high importance. These visits are connected with EducationUSA outreach activities and advising services for high school students outside of the capital.

- **5 Steps To U.S. Study** - on March 8 and May 3, 2023, EducationUSA Advisor conducted in-person presentations for 23 high school students of Evanjelické gymnázium in Banská Bystrica and 34 students in Gymnázium P. Horova in Michalovce. The presentation focused on study opportunities at universities in

the U.S. and included a short comparison of the Slovak and American school system and standardized tests, and students were presented with additional options for academic exchange.

- **Open Advising Session** - During a visit to Banská Bystrica (March 8 – 9, 2023), the EdUSA advisor, in cooperation with the American Center in Banská Bystrica, organized a public advising session about study opportunities and Fulbright scholarships. The event was attended by 8 people who came for consultation and to learn about program opportunities.

EducationUSA Regional Forum in Belgrade: EducationUSA Advisor Zuzana Kopčanová participated in the EducationUSA Europe and Eurasia Regional Forum in Belgrade, Serbia (September 19-21, 2022) organized by the U.S. Department of State. The Forum hosted 54 advisors from 35 European countries and included a one-day professional training for advisors and a three-day conference. The professional training focused on professional development, networking activities, and sharing hands-on experiences between advisors. The conference program focused on recruitment strategies in post-pandemic times, using virtual advising, and promoting activities in the virtual environment. The conference also included a Country Fair, where advisors presented their countries and got an opportunity to talk to the HEI representatives about recruitment in their countries.

- **Alumni**

The Commission continues to cooperate closely the Fulbright alumni, especially the Slovak Fulbright Alumni Association (SFAA). Fulbright alumni assist the Commission in different ways, i.e. they serve as consultants and evaluators of project proposals, participate at orientation seminars and mid-year conferences, serve as initial connection with the host country and help grantees with different issues that occur prior (when preparing for the stay) and during their stay, and thus, help to promote the goals of the Fulbright Program. The Commission will continue to encourage alumni to participate in the events and activities of the Commission. Fulbright and Humphrey alumni are also supporting the U.S. Embassy's activities with their expertise.

Commission-supported alumni activities:

- **Conference “Neurodiversity At Work”** - The Fulbright Commission was a partner of the conference “Neurodiversity at work” held on November 22, 2022, where ED Lýdia Tobiašová gave opening remarks together with other partners. The conference was organized by **Humphrey alumna Anna Podlesná** who received support from the **Alumni Impact Award** and in cooperation with her mentor prof. Connie Sung developed the concept of international public-private partnership (**Profesia Lab**). This initiative aims to bridge the disability employment gap in Slovakia by using the best practices and knowledge in the employment of people with disabilities from Michigan State University. The main objective of Profesia Lab is to improve the transition of Slovak youth with disabilities from schools to competitive employment by implementing the **Assistive Soft Skills and Employment Training (ASSET program)**, developed by experts from Michigan State University. The conference launched this program in Slovakia.
- **Alumni meeting in Košice and visits at TUKE.** In cooperation with the U.S. Embassy, the Commission supported the alumni meeting in Košice on February 8, 2023. Program officer Dáša Tako Velichová attended the event.
- **Women’s empowerment webinar** on March 28, 2023 - program officer Dáša Tako Velichová organized a webinar on women’s empowerment where she invited several Fulbright alumnae and grantees as guest speakers: Mária Havelková, Meredith Johnson, Kristin Tollefson, Alena Vachnová and Liliana Wurfl. They discussed different aspects of womens’ professional life.

- **Outreach**

The core outreach and recruitment activities to attract prospective candidates of Fulbright awards rely mainly on virtual ads and visits to universities outside of the capital, reaching out to audiences with different backgrounds, re-connecting with alumni from different parts of the country and promoting Fulbright opportunities for

individuals as well as institutions. Based on the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, online workshops remain an important part of the recruitment process, on which Fulbright alumni and/or U.S. universities representatives can participate easily.

Social media – Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Youtube are crucial in communication with the interested audience. They are used to reach a broader audience, to raise awareness of the Commission's programs, activities, grantees and alumni and their impact, and the overall prestige of the Fulbright program. However, the Commission's webpage remains the primary resource and administrative tool for information and guidance on the Fulbright program's opportunities and other scholarships.

In the academic year 2022-23, the Commission and the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava continued to cooperate closely in a series of events organized either by the Commission or the U.S. Embassy:

- **Meeting with American Spaces Coordinators** on November 28, 2022 - the Commission met with American Spaces Slovakia coordinators during their annual training hosted by the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava.
- **High school visits** - the Commission conducted 6 high schools that hosted ETAs. The purpose of these visits was to check ETA performance and fulfillment, discuss any issues with their respective mentors, audit their classes, and give presentations about undergraduate studies in the U.S.:
 - December 12, 2022 – Stredná odborná škola pedagogická Trenčianske Teplice – ETA Meredith Johnson
 - December 13, 2022 – Gymnázium Dubnica nad Váhom – ETA Emma Steffan
 - February 13, 2023 – Stredná priemyselná škola Elektrotechnická, Zochova, Bratislava – ETA Evan Diliberto
 - March 9, 2023 – Gymnázium Andreja Sládkoviča, Banská Bystrica – ETA Avery Whittington
 - May 3, 2023 – Gymnázium Pavla Horova, Michalovce – ETA Ryan McCracken
 - May 5, 2023 – Spojená škola, Detva – ETA Lilly Wilcox
- **I Live Science Conference** “I live science/Žijem vedu naživo” took place in person in Bratislava on December 20, 2022, and the Fulbright Commission participated to present research grant opportunities for participants and widen its network of contacts.
- **Visit to the Technical University of Košice (February 9, 2022)** - Dáša Tako Velichová, a program officer, met with the Vice-dean of the Faculty of Aeronautics, the Vice-rector for international relations, and the Vice-dean of Faculty of Materials, Metallurgy and Recycling and promoted the opportunities of the Fulbright Program.
 - **SK-US Map of Cooperation** - on January 17, 2023, the U.S. Embassy project was presented at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra. Fulbright opportunities were presented by ED Lýdia Tobiášová. On March 29, 2023 the project was presented at the University of Saint Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. Fulbright opportunities were presented by Program Officer Dáša Tako Velichová.
- **ELT MeetUps** - Program Coordinator Zuzana Kopčanová presented Fulbright opportunities for English high school teachers at the ELT meetups hosted by American Spaces in Košice (May 3, 2023) and Banská Bystrica (May 4, 2023), and by the Regional Library in Žilina (December 12, 2022). Besides regional English teachers, the events were attended by ETAs and their mentors, who shared their personal experience hosting teaching assistants at their high schools.
- **American Days** - the U.S. Embassy organized a series of American Days during the week of May 15-19, 2023 which included cities of Poprad, Rožňava, Banská Bystrica, Nitra and Trenčín. The Commission participated in events in Banská Bystrica and Nitra (May 16 and 17, 2023), where they presented Fulbright opportunities and the EducationUSA advising center.
- **Scholarships and Grants to the United States (webinar)** - the Commission participated in a webinar organized by SAIA (Slovak focused on scholarship opportunities in the United States held on May 25, 2023. Our program coordinators presented all programs relevant to Slovak applicants, as well as programs for institutions. The webinar had 22 attendees.
- **Q&A webinars on Fulbright (and SUSIS) programs** introducing Fulbright program with the participation of alumni who shared their experiences: 2 webinars on FTEA Program (February 21 and March 7, 2023), 2 webinars on Fulbright Slovak Student Program (March 14 and May 17, 2023), 2 webinars on Fulbright Slovak Scholar Program (May 23 and September 13, 2023), 1 webinar on Fulbright

Specialist Program (June 20, 2023), a webinar on SUSIs for Student Leaders (on October 19, 2022) and a webinar on SUSIs for Scholars and Secondary Educators (on October 6, 2022).

1. [The Handbook for U.S. Grantees and the Handbook for Slovak Grantees and the Emergency Plan](#)

The handbooks and other materials for grantees are being updated each academic year. The Commission provides grantees in all programs with useful hints and guidelines on the specific requirements of each program and information of all aspects of their stay in Slovakia.

G. ADMINISTRATION/STAFF AND FUNDING

1. [The Commission and the Commission's Staff](#)

Located in the center of Bratislava, the Commission's office is easily accessible via public transportation. The Slovak Ministry of Education, Research and Sports covers expenses for space, utilities, telephone, security, and internet connection.

Active co-operation with representatives of respective governments, partner agencies and Fulbright Commissions especially in Europe have become essential for maintaining the quality of operations and administration.

The knowledge and application of Slovak, European and U.S. laws is crucial for successful administration of the Fulbright Program.

The Commission staff participate in various activities, such as professional training, seminars and conferences which focus on issues of domestic and international higher education, education at all educational levels, international policy, civil society, non-profit activities, and marketing activities.

Changes in the Staff of the Commission:

- Ms. Zuzana Kopčanová, Program officer/EdUSA advisor, ended her employment on May 31, 2023. Ms. Silvia Miadoková was hired as a replacement as of August 1, 2023.
- Ms. Denisa Domaracká, Financial Officer, ended her full-time employment with the Commission on August 31, 2023 and will continue to provide services to the Commission as an external finance officer.
- **Ms. Payton Aper (University of Michigan)** has joined the Commission as Communication and social media intern for 6 weeks (June 14-July 25, 2023).

2. [Staff Training/International Travel](#)

- [Media Literacy Seminar in Warsaw, October 28-30, 2022](#): Fulbright Poland organized the Media Literacy Seminar for a group of 40 ETAs from Slovakia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, and Poland. The seminar aimed to build ETA skills in media literacy and develop their understanding of processes leading to disinformation. It was also an opportunity for ETAs to network with their peers. 3 ETAs from Slovakia participated in the seminar: Michael Griffin, Ryan McCracken, and Lauren Whittington.

- February 28-March 4, 2023: ED Lýdia Tobiášová and current ETA Nathaniel Sansom (Rožňava) attended the [2023 Fulbright Seminar on the European Union and NATO](#) held in Brussels and Luxembourg. Highlights of this event included visits to institutions like the European Commission, European Parliament, and NATO Headquarters, as well as opportunities to meet with representatives of the U.S. Mission to the European Union, the U.S. Mission to NATO, and the U.S. Embassy to Luxembourg.
- May 1-May 5, 2023: ED Lýdia Tobiášová attended [the European Fulbright Conference in Prague](#) and the regular European Executive Directors meeting.
- May 23-26, 2023: ED Lýdia Tobiášová attended [the Global Fulbright Meeting in Washington D.C.](#) The global meeting was organized ahead of the NAFSA conference for all 49 EDs in the world, including representatives from the U.S. Department of State, ECA, IIE and World Learning.
- May 30-June 2, 2023: ED Lýdia Tobiášová and Dáša Tako Velichová attended the [NAFSA 2023 Annual Conference & Expo in Washington D.C.](#) The conference allowed the Commission to meet U.S. colleagues and representatives of cooperating agencies and IHEs, as well as discover the latest innovations and strategies in international education. This year, for the first time in NAFSA's 75-year history, Slovakia was represented and had a Slovak National Booth at the expo. The Slovak Ministry of Education and the Slovak Embassy in the U.S hosted a national reception. In addition to Slovak participants, representatives from the U.S. Department of State, the Institute of International Education, and a few of the executive directors were present.
- May 5-7, 2023: ED Lýdia Tobiášová visited the [University of Michigan, Ann Arbor's Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia](#), and met with Director Geneviève Zubrzycki and Birgitta Kohler of the University's International Office. She also met with Fulbright program advisor and scholar liaison Dr. Takata, Slovak Scholar Stanislav Zábojník of the Ross School of Business, US Scholar program alumna Zuzana Tomaš, Humphrey alum Štefan Hudec, and Amy Gillett, the Vice-President of Education at William Davidson Institute.
- [Staff Training in Warsaw, Poland in July 10-12, 2023](#) - ED Lýdia Tobiášová and a program officer Dáša Tako Velichová took part in an intensive 3-day training hosted by Fulbright Poland which brought together staff members from Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Ukraine. The workshop created a platform for the exchange of best practices in different aspects of the administration of the Fulbright program and professional networking.
- [Training on Digital marketing](#) - Dáša Tako Velichová successfully completed and obtained a certificate from a training in digital marketing. The training started in October 2022 and was successfully completed in August 2023. The training offered 30 lectures prepared by different experts in the field, including content marketing, social media, analytics, brand marketing, graphic design, webpage design etc.

3. Funding

U.S. and Slovak contributions remain the main source of funding. In-kind contributions are provided through the administration of other programs and partnering with host universities and institutions.

The respective fiscal year of the Fulbright Commission is observed as set by U.S. (October 1 – September 30) and Slovak (January 1 – December 31) regulations. The financial income is composed of two sources of funding: allocation from the U.S. Government and allocation from the Slovak Government. In 2023 the Slovak government increased the allocation for the second year in a row as officially declared at the end of 2021. The increase has been used mainly for the ETA program. The Slovak government plans to reach the parity in funding in 2024.

In-kind contributions to the Commission include tuition waivers, funds allocated to other programs through other U.S. or Slovak government activities, health insurance for the grantees, private in-kind sponsorship etc.

Annually, the Commission is subject to an independent audit of receipts and disbursements and on the internal control structure. The Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport also audits the expenses from the Slovak government contribution separately.

Review of Financial Funding in the FY 2023

INCOME	USD
Government Funding	779,734
U. S. Government Funding	470,177
Slovak Partner Government Funding	309,557
In-Kind Contributions	98,069
Fulbright Specialist Program	3,000
Fulbright U.S. Student Program	3,600
Fulbright ETA Program	21,000
Fulbright US Scholar Program	5,000
Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship	23,669
Study Tour for Journalists	41,800
Surplus Funds from Previous Years	361,391
TOTAL INCOME	1,239,194
EXPENSES	USD
Program Expenses	429,757
Non-Grant Program Expenses*	28,488
Administrative Expenses	198,654
TOTAL EXPENSES	656,899

*Non-Grant Program Expenses cover:

Information Programs for U.S. and Slovak Grantees

Grant Supplement Expenses for U.S. and Slovak Grantees

Educational Material

Web Page and Social Media Management

In-Country Travel

Operation of the Advising Center

Not included are costs for the Accident and Sickness Insurance for all grantees provided by the U.S. State Department.

exchange rate 1 EUR = 1,0594 USD as of 30 September 2023